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# TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE....

## A Column on Consumer Issues

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### **When Winning Does Not Register**

Registration booths are common sights at county fairs, the State Fair, and various trade shows. All you have to do is fill out a card with your name, address and telephone number, and drop it in the box. These booths sometimes offer a free gift or "giveaway," but the main purpose is to build a list of customers to contact later with a sales pitch. Neither of these purposes is illegal, but they confuse many consumers.

Companies frequently use registration booths to market their products. The company puts a box among the display at a fair or trade show, with a big sign that says something like "Register Here." The words "free" or "contest" never appear, but people walking by wrongly assume a box at a booth means something is being given away, so they fill out a card and put it in the box.

There is no contest - nothing is being given away. Companies use these forms to expand their customer list. Your personal information is entered into their computer, and then they will contact you and try and sell you something.

If you get such a call, be skeptical. Compare the prices being offered to you with a local merchant to make sure it is a good deal. It is always a good idea to do business with local, reputable companies. If you have questions about any company, you can also call the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 701-328-3404 or toll free in North Dakota at 1-800-472-2600.

Whenever you see a registration box, read all of the signs around it carefully to make sure you know what you are doing. Is the company indeed giving something away? Be very wary if the form you are asked to fill out asks for your household income, credit cards used and the best time to call you at home. That is usually a tip that you are being set up for a sales pitch, not a giveaway. For future reference, take an extra copy of the registration form with you because it usually has the name of the company on it.

Always remember that if you have really won something, you should not have to pay a cent to get it. Anytime you have to pay money to claim a prize you are really buying that prize.

*The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates allegations of fraud in the marketplace. Investigators also mediate individual complaints against businesses. If you have a consumer problem or question, call the Consumer Protection Division at 328-3404 (v/TDD) or toll-free at 1-800-472-2600 (v/TDD). This article and other consumer information is located on our website at [www.ag.state.nd.us](http://www.ag.state.nd.us).*

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